

INTERVIEWING TIPS

Well, it's that time again--time to prepare yourself for the journey that lies ahead. It can be a little scary, but with the proper preparation you will do much better. Below are some general tips to get your focus on track. With a few interviews you'll be on your way!

Interview Tip 1: Plan Ahead - Do a little homework! Research the company and the position if possible, as well, the people you will meet with at the interview. Review your work experiences. Be ready to support past career accomplishments with specific information targeted toward the companies needs. Have your facts ready!

Interview Tip 2: Role Play - Once you have finished studying, begin role playing (rehearsing). Use the general questions provided below in the Interview Preparation Area. Write down answers if it helps to make your presentation more concise. Try to keep your answers to the information your new employer will want to know.



Interview Tip 3: Eye Contact - Maintain eye contact with your interviewer. Show you want the job with your interest.

Interview Tip 4: Be Positive - In particular, avoid negative comments about past employers.

Interview Tip 5: Adapt - Listen and adapt. Be sensitive to the style of the interviewer. Pay attention to those details of dress, office furniture, and general decor which will afford helpful clues to assist you in tailoring your presentation.

Interview Tip 6: Relate - Try to relate your answers to the interviewer and his or her company. Focus on achievements relevant to the position.

Interview Tip 7: Encourage - Encourage the interviewer to share information about his or her company. Demonstrate your interest. Some suggested questions to ask the interviewer are provided in the "Questions You Could Consider Asking the Employer" section.

Interview Preparation Area

Below are questions you may be asked in the interview

Tell me about yourself? (try to hold your response to 2 minutes)

What do you know about our company?

Why should we hire you?

What can you do for us that someone else can't?

What do you look for in a job?

What skills and qualifications are essential for success in the position of _____?

How long would it take for you to make a meaningful contribution?

How does this assignment fit into your overall career plan?

Describe your management style.

What do you believe is the most difficult part of being a supervisor of people?

Why are you looking for a new career?

How would your colleagues describe you?

How would your boss describe you?

How would you describe yourself?

What do you think of your present or past boss?

What were the five most significant accomplishments in your last assignment?

What were the five most significant accomplishments in your career so far?

Can you work well under deadlines or pressure?

How much do you expect if we offer you this position?

Why do you want to work for us?

What other positions are you considering?

Have you kept up in your field with additional training?

What are your career goals?

What are your strong points?

What are your weak points?

How did you do in school?

What position do you expect to have in 2 to 5 years?

If you took the job what would you accomplish in the first year?

What was wrong with your current or last position?

What kind of hours are you used to working or would like to work?

Do you have your reference list with you? (Remember don't give it out unless it is asked for).

Can you explain your salary history?

What questions didn't I ask that you expected?

Do you have any question for me? (See Questions for the Interviewer that you might want to ask below).

Interview Preparation Area 2.



Below are questions you may want to ask the Interviewer

1. Why is this position open?
2. How often has it been filled in the past five years? What were the main reasons?
3. What would you like done differently by the next person who fills this position?
4. What are some of the objectives you would like to see accomplished in this job?
5. What is most pressing? What would you like to have done in the next 3 months.
6. What are some of the long term objectives you would like to see completed?
7. What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position?
 8. How do you think these could best be handled?
 9. What type of support does this position receive in terms of people, finances. etc?
 10. What freedom would I have in determining my own work objectives, deadlines, and methods of measurement?
11. What advancement opportunities are available for the person who is successful in this position, and within what time frame?

12. In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?

13. What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?

14. How is one evaluated in this position?

15. What accounts for success within the company?

16. These questions are presented only as interviewing guidelines. They are meant to help you prepare for the interview. Some questions may or may not be appropriate for your interviewing situation.

17. By practicing your responses to some of these questions, hopefully you will not be taken off guard if asked one of them. Most importantly, relax, go with the flow, and before you know it, you'll be in your next job.

Interview Tips

Employers conduct interviews to:

- Learn more about your qualifications for the job.
- Determine how well you will fit with in the organization.

Interviews are your chance to sell your skills and experience. They also give you a chance to find out if the job and company are right for you.

Preparation tips

Match your skills to the job

To help ensure a successful interview, you should know in advance how well you qualify for the job. One way to get this information is to request a written job description. For each requirement listed in the description, write down your qualifications—this may show that you lack a particular skill. Plan how you will address this in the interview. You want to be able to convince the employer that you can learn the skill. For example, you lack skill in programming in C++ language. Knowing when and where you can enroll in a C++ course in your community may convince the employer that you're the right person to hire.

Plan what you are going to say

One of the most important things that you can do to prepare is to plan what you going to say. Try to have some stories about your work experience that illustrate your skills, experience, and education. These stories should relate to the skills that the employer is seeking, while emphasizing your:

- Strengths
- Leadership skills
- Ability to learn new things
- Contributions to the organizations in which you have worked or volunteered
- Creativity in solving problems and working with people

Another tip for preparing is to make a list of questions that you would like to ask during the interview. Pick questions that will demonstrate your interest in the job and the company and that illustrate your knowledge of the job.

Create a checklist

Don't forget the basics. Plan a "things to do" list:

- Go to bed early and get plenty of sleep.
- Plan to dress in a manner appropriate to the job for which you are interviewing.
- Plan your schedule and route so that you arrive 10 to 15 minutes before your appointment.
- Bring extra copies of your resumes.
- Gather together your letter(s) of recommendation, reference list, copies of licenses, driving record, transcripts, etc.
- Make sure that your portfolio of work samples is up to date.

Tips for the interview

Because interviews are such a critical part of your job search, you want to get the most out of each one. The following Do's and Don'ts are presented to help ensure that your interview is a success.

The Do's

- Your behavior and how you communicate
- The attitudes that you express
- How to end the interview
- Following up after the interview

The Don'ts

- Why people don't get hired

The "Do's" - Your behavior and how you communicate

- Display confidence through your posture, dress, walk, energy, and eye contact.
- Shake hands firmly but only if a hand is offered to you first.
- Let the interviewer start the dialogue.
- Listen carefully.
- Welcome all questions, even the difficult ones, with a smile.
- Develop answers in your head before you respond. If you don't understand a question, ask for it to be repeated or clarified. You don't have to rush, but you don't want to appear indecisive.
- Give honest, direct answers.

The "Do's" - The attitudes that you express

In answering and asking questions, you want to demonstrate that you are:

- **Willing to work.** Give examples of your productivity on past jobs.
- **Committed to learning.** Demonstrate this through examples of learning experiences (independent study, professional development, education, workshops, etc.). Your plan for future development also communicates your commitment to learning.
- **Flexible.** Talk about how well you work with others and how you can adjust and fit into a new environment without complaints or special requests.
- **Willing to contribute.** Emphasize what you can do for the company.

The "Do's" - How to end the interview

A professional positive end to the interview is another way to ensure your success. Now is the time to remind the employer of why you are qualified for the job.

- Restate any strengths and experiences that you might not have emphasized earlier.
- Mention a particular accomplishment or activity that fits the job.

The end of the interview is also the time to let the employer know if you are interested in the job:

- If you want the job, say so!
- Ask when the position will be filled.
- Find out if there will be additional interviews and when the employer plans to make a decision.
- Indicate a time when you may contact the employer to learn of the decision.

Finally, be courteous and end the interview on time.

The "Do's" - Following up after the interview

The steps that you take after the interview are important too. For example, take time to:

- **Evaluate the interview.** What went well in the interview? How can you improve?
- **Record your follow-up plans.** Write the date and time for your next contact with the employer so you do not forget to follow through.
- **Send thank-you letters or notes** to each person with whom you interviewed.

The "Don'ts" - Why people don't get hired

There are many reasons why people fail to get hired:

- Poor personal appearance
- Application form or resume is incomplete or sloppy
- Overly aggressive behavior

- Lack of tact and courtesy
- Lack of maturity
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Nervousness or lack of confidence and poise
- Failure to ask questions about the job
- Responding vaguely to questions
- No eye contact with the interviewer
- No genuine interest in the company or job
- Lack of planning for career; no purpose and no goals
- Over-emphasis on money
- Unwillingness to start at the bottom
- Negative attitude about past employers
- No sense of humor
- Arriving late for the interview
- Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time

Interview Tips

These interview tips are taken from a sheet at an Illinois Library Association conference session.

1. 85% of the verbal content of the interview will be forgotten within an hour of the candidate's departure. What remain are the overall impression, documents submitted, and a few notes.
2. Remember that the interview is an informal chat to determine if your background fits into the library's needs to your mutual satisfaction.
3. Arrive at least 15 minutes early; spend the previous day in the community if possible.
4. Dress appropriately. Be businesslike, approachable, and confident in your appearance. No gum, cigarette smell, heavy scents.
5. Carry an attractive portfolio. It provides a tidy, efficient place to store questions you may want to ask, information about yourself you want to be sure to transmit, a place to carry additional resumes for distribution to department heads, search committees, and others you may meet who have not seen your resume.
6. Do your homework on the institution. You should receive a packet of information about the library after the interview has been arranged. If you don't, ask for one. Then go after other information.
 - Review annual reports, mission statements, long/short range planning documents
 - Learn something about the institution/community
 - Public library -- community strengths/problems, levels/history of library support, financial and otherwise
 - Academic library -- level/history of institutional support, strengths/weaknesses of collection, history/direction of institution
 - Talk to colleagues, friends, fellow alumni who are/have been connected to the institution
 - Visit informally ahead of time if possible
7. Prepare/practice responses to likely questions.
8. Prepare to be tested either formally or informally with:
 - Your response to a reference query
 - Cataloging an item
 - Your knowledge of subject matter specialty

- Your solution to an administrative problem
 - Your approach to a community/institutional issue
 - Development of a program
 - Your approach to the solution of an automation/system problem
9. If you have to do a formal presentation, be well prepared. Inform the search committee/employer, know in advance of any computer/technical support you will need.
 10. You should take the opportunity to ask questions about the entire work environment, interviewing the interviewer by asking about the relationship between the library/users/administration, the kinds of organizational change that have occurred in the last 5 years, and what makes the institution a challenging and enjoyable place to work.
 11. Your ability to ask straightforward, insightful questions lets the interviewer understand your perspective and concerns, as well as your judgment and analytical ability.
 12. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE
 - In front of a mirror
 - With an audience of friends/colleagues
 13. Review/evaluate your interview's strengths/weaknesses immediately after the interview.
 14. Write/mail thank you notes immediately.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR Educators

Remember that one of the strongest predictors of success in an interview is *preparation!* In addition to this handout, please refer to the Successful Interviewing handout. This handout is intended for teachers, specialists, and school counselors.

General Questions

Why do you want to be a teacher?

How has Lesley University prepared you to become a teacher?

How would you evaluate your Lesley program? What courses did you like best and least?

What parts of teaching appeal most to you? What parts appeal least?

What is your philosophy of teaching?

What special skills or talents will you bring to our classroom?

Tell me a little about yourself? (Hear: Tell me about yourself professionally as it related to this position.)

What does diversity mean to you?

What has been your most inspiring moment in teaching?

What do you think will be the most challenging aspect of teaching for you?

At the end of the school year, how will you determine whether or not you were successful?

Who was your most influential teacher and why?

What are your professional goals? Where do you want to be in five years?

What is your greatest strength as an educator? What is greatest weakness as an educator?
(Tip: Omit the word "greatest" as you consider this question. Focus on strategies you are using to overcome an area of challenge.)

Why do you want to teach in this district/school?

What are your interests?

Questions About Student Teaching

What was most rewarding/frustrating about your student teaching?

Describe the best lesson you taught and one that didn't work.

From your student teaching experience, what would you have eliminated from the curriculum?

If I were interviewing your students, what would they say about you?

During your student teaching, if it had been your classroom, what would you have done differently?

If I spoke with your cooperating practitioner, what would she/he say you do especially well? What would she/he say you could improve upon?

Questions for Elementary Teachers

In what curriculum areas do you feel particularly strong?

What grade do you want to teach and why?

Describe an ideal reading program.

Describe a typical school day and the activities of children.

How you would involve parents in the classroom?

What is Guided Reading?

How would you incorporate phonics into a balanced literacy program?

What would you do if a parent escorted her daughter into your classroom in the morning, angry that you had placed her in the "wrong" reading group?

What do you know about _____ grade developmentally and how would you incorporate that knowledge into the curriculum? What is important in _____ grade?

What are the components of a balanced reading program?

Are you familiar with Everyday Math and/or Investigations?

During literacy time in your classroom, what are you doing? What are the children doing?

Describe rules for a _____ grade classroom vs. a _____ grade classroom.

Questions for Teachers K-12

When I visit your classroom, what will I find to be most impressive?

Describe the first day of school.

Tell me about a time when you worked with ELL students.

What kind of homework do you give to _____ graders?

Describe how you have aligned a lesson with the MA Curriculum Frameworks.

How would you go about developing a curriculum unit?

How will you integrate technology into the curriculum?

How would you set up your classroom?

How will the MCAS impact your teaching?

How will you evaluate students' mastery of a subject?

What instructional approaches would you use in your classroom?

What would you do if a student brought in a project and it was obviously done by a parent?

What is your approach to classroom management? How is classroom management different from discipline?

Tell me about a time when you had a disruptive student in your classroom. How did you handle the situation?

Questions for Special Education Teachers

What type of assessments have you used?

Describe a student with a challenging learning disability and how you supported him/her.

What are your views on inclusion and remediation?

What are some of the timelines related to IEPs?

How have you supported students on IEPs in the regular classroom?

Describe both a successful and challenging collaboration experience with a regular education teacher.

Questions for School Counselors

Please describe your counseling experience with individuals and groups. Tell me about some specific examples.

Describe your crisis intervention experience.

Describe your collaboration with community agencies when you were a school counseling intern (i.e. DSS, DMH, community mental health organizations, hospitals, etc).

What experience and knowledge do you have regarding special education laws and issues?

Our school is culturally diverse. What impact do you see that having on the role of the school counselor?

If you had the opportunity to offer classroom workshops, what topics would you address and how would you approach them?

Tell me about a difficult interaction with a parent.

What knowledge and/or experience do you have in filing out a 51A?

How have you dealt with issues of bullying, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse and prevention?

For high school: What experience do you have with assisting students with the career planning and college admissions process?

Types of Interview Questions

Subject Area - Designed to assess your knowledge of both theory and practice in your area of licensure.

Educational Methodology - Designed to elicit information on your techniques in dealing with classroom situations.

Educational Philosophy - Focus on your value system and commitment to teaching.

Hypothetical Situations - Questions which ask you to respond to hypothetical situations which might come up as a teacher.

Behavioral Interviewing Questions - Rather than a hypothetical situation, you are asked to describe how you handled an actual specific situation in the past.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Would you describe the in-service training opportunities in your district?

To a principal: How would you describe your leadership style?

What are the strengths of this district?

What kind of support/mentoring is available to first year teachers?

How active are parents in this building and in the school district?

What are the opportunities for team teaching or team planning?

How do you anticipate this district changing over the next five years?

Are extracurricular assignments available for teachers interested in, and qualified for, after school activities?

I read about your new _____ program on your web site. Would you tell me a bit more about it? or How has it been received by students/parents?

What models of special education are utilized in this district?

Top 10 Interview Questions for Teachers to Ask

You've thought long and hard about what your answers will be to all of the typical interview questions. Now it's time to think about *your* questions. Whether you're facing an interview panel or the manager of a school, it is important that you arrive prepared with a few concerns of your own. Your confidence and genuine interest in the position could separate you from the other candidates.

Before you ask the questions, you should also think about what answers you want to hear. This is especially important if you are interviewing for more than one job at a time. Keep in mind that you don't have to save all of your questions until the end of the interview. In fact, if you wait until the end you may feel uncomfortable asking more than one or two. Let the flow of the interview guide you, and try to ask questions as they arise.

Remembering your questions

Interviews make many people nervous, and nerves make it difficult to remember things. It is a good idea to prepare an index card ahead of time with your list of questions. Refer to it only at the end of an interview when you are asked if you have any *more* questions.

How to order your questions

While the interview should guide your questions, don't forget the golden rule about first impressions. If you ask about pay or prep time first, the employer may feel that teaching is merely a job and not a passion for you. The following questions are presented in random order. Choose the ones that are important to you. Prioritize ahead of time, by placing a star beside questions you feel are the most important. Even if you are asking questions as they come up, ten may be too many questions to ask in a short interview. When deciding which questions are appropriate, don't forget that your main role is *interviewee*. This is especially important for teachers to keep in mind, since asking lots of questions comes naturally.

Question 1: What is the student demographic at your school?

Before you accept a job, you will want to consider your own strengths. Are you more comfortable teaching adults, teens, or children? Do you have the appropriate skills and personality to deal with disadvantaged youth or business students?

Question 2: What administrative/other tasks are required outside of teaching hours?

Some schools require that teachers submit detailed lesson plans ahead of time. Others require monthly report cards, parent interviews, and cleaning or lunchroom duties. Some schools pay for work outside of the classroom and others do not.

Question 3: Can you describe the teacher turnover at this school?

Watch for an honest answer when you ask this question. If the interviewer's answer isn't specific enough, you may want to rephrase your question. For example, you could say: "May I ask why the last two teachers left?" If the interviewer avoids the question, or changes the subject, this may not be a school you want to work for. Find out if there are any long-term teachers at the school. Again, you can be more specific: "How long has your senior staff been in place?" If there are senior staff who have been on the faculty for a few years then there is good reason to believe that the teachers are treated with respect and that the working environment is healthy. This may also be a sign that the school offers regular raises. Good reasons for teacher turnover include moving to another city or country, changing careers, visa expiry, illness, or paternity leave.

Question 4: What is the average class size?

There are challenges and advantages to teaching small and large classes. However, schools that are willing to keep their class sizes down often have steady enrolment. Students in smaller classes generally improve at a faster rate and are therefore more satisfied with their learning. Teaching a larger class may require more work of you, and it is important that you feel that you are being compensated fairly. Your personality may also be more suited to teaching smaller classes, or vice versa.

Question 5: Do your teachers participate in extra-curricular activities?

Some teachers enjoy taking their students on field trips and strapping on snowboards or ice skates, even if they aren't getting paid. Others prefer not to do any socializing with the students outside of school. If extra-curricular activities are important to you, make sure to ask about them.

Question 6: Does the school hold regular staff meetings?

A first interview may not be the time to ask if you get paid for staff meetings. On the other hand, if quality education is important to you, and you want to have a voice at the school you work at, you'll want to work for a school where teacher input is valued and meetings are held regularly with administrators and management.

Question 7: Is there a set curriculum?

If you're wondering how much time you will be preparing for your classes, but don't want to sound lazy to a potential employer, ask about the current curriculum. If this leads naturally to a question about how much prep time is compensated for, even better! Most administrators anticipate questions about prep time, and they may tell you the answer without your direct question.

Question 8: What types of resources and teaching aids are available?

Does the school have a computer lab with free Internet and printers? A photocopier? What about a VCR or DVD player? Do the classrooms have whiteboards or will you have an overhead projector? Is there a teaching room where staff gathers before and after class?

Question 9: What is the payment schedule?

Sometimes it is awkward to bring up the subject of payment. If the interview is coming to a close, and no discussion of payment has come up, you may have to be the one to ask. You can ease into your question by asking if there is a starting salary for all new teachers, or if salary is based on experience. Also, you will want to know how often payments are made, and if you are paid for any hours outside of classroom time. If you don't ask, you may end up wasting everyone's time when you find out in a second interview that the pay is too low or that the contract is only for three months.

Question 10: May I have a tour of the school?

To avoid interrupting the interview, this is one question you may want to hold until the end. If a manager is unwilling to show you a classroom or the facilities, consider this a warning. Offer to come back at a more appropriate time (such as at lunch hour) and see if the answer changes. If you are taken on the tour, keep your eye out for smiling teachers and students, resource shelves, and evidence of a comfortable learning environment. If you don't see a photocopier or two, ask to make sure there is one!

Be prepared to answer the following interview questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What type of reading program did you use in student teaching?
- If I walked into your classroom during reading time, what would I see?
- Tell me what you know about the 4-block Literacy Model.
- What is your personal educational philosophy?
- If you could design the ideal classroom for the elementary grades what would it look like?
- Which subject area do you believe is your strength, which is your weakest? What steps will you take to improve in this area?
- What are the most important or worthwhile qualifications of a good teacher?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?
- Describe your student teaching successes and failures?
- Describe a good lesson, explain why it was good.
- How would you go about planning a lesson?
- How would you individualize a curriculum for students at various levels?
- How would you identify special needs of students?
- What methods do you use for classroom management? Describe one difficult incident with a student, and how you handled it.
- How would you handle difficult parents?

- Give me an example of a rule or procedure in your classroom?
- What methods have you used or would you use to assess student learning?
- What does being "at-risk" for school failure mean?
- What are some of the factors/conditions that might put a child at-risk?
- What experience have you had incorporating computers in a classroom?
- What grade level would you be most comfortable teaching?
- Are you a team player? If so, please give me an example.
- What was the last educational book you read?